

Lyons Mill Footbridge  
(Devil's Chair Footbridge)  
Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway  
Washington  
District of Columbia

HAER No. DC-35

HAER  
DC  
WASH,  
586-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Washington, DC 20013-7127

HAER  
DC  
WASH,  
586-

**HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD**  
**LYONS MILL FOOTBRIDGE**  
**(Devil's Chair Footbridge)**  
HAER No. DC-35

**Location:** Lyons Mill Footbridge spans Rock Creek at a point approximately one-fifth mile northwest of Q Street Bridge. It is located on a pedestrian trail, with its eastern abutment just 30' from the southbound lanes of the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway, Washington, D.C.

**Date of Construction:** 1932-34.

**Designer/Builder:** National Park Service, Eastern Division, Branch of Plans and Designs.

**Present Owner:** National Park Service.

**Present Use:** Footbridge.

**Significance:** Lyons Mill Bridge is one of a series of eight footbridges built in Rock Creek Park during the Depression, of which Rapids Footbridge (HAER No. DC-14) is the most notable. All these bridges were Public Works Administration projects. The rustic style exemplifies the type of crossing advocated by Albert H. Good in his sourcebook, Park Structures and Facilities (1935).<sup>1</sup> Good recommended stone or wood as a construction material, and a rugged or informal appearance for bridges in park settings.<sup>2</sup> However, concrete was acceptable for reasons of economy, but only so long as the material was expressed honestly. In his book, Good illustrated the Rapids Footbridge, and described it as a "frankly concrete" bridge in Rock Creek Park.<sup>3</sup>

**Project Information:** The documentation of Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway was undertaken as a two-year pilot project to help establish standards and guidelines for recording the structures and landscape features of park roads and parkways. This project was a joint effort of the Historic American Buildings Survey and the Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), a combined division of the National Park Service, Robert Kapsch, chief. The project was sponsored by the Park Roads Program of the National Park Service, John Gingles, deputy chief, Safety Services Division. The project supervisor was Sara Amy Leach, HABS historian.

---

<sup>1</sup> William Bushong, Historic Resource Study: Rock Creek Park, District of Columbia (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1990), 178.

<sup>2</sup> Albert H. Good, Park and Recreation Structures: Part I-- Administration and Basic Service Facilities (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1938), 175-76.

<sup>3</sup> Good, 187.

The Washington-based summer 1992 documentation team was headed by landscape architect Robert Harvey (Iowa State University-Department of Landscape Architecture) who served as field supervisor; the landscape architects were Deborah Warshaw (University of Virginia) and Dorota Pape-Siliwonzuk (US/ICOMOS-Poland, Board of Historical Palaces and Gardens Restoration); the architects were Evan Miller (University of Colorado-Boulder), Steven Nose (University of Maryland), and Tony Arcaro (Catholic University). The historians were Tim Davis (University of Texas) and Amy Ross (University of Virginia). Jack E. Boucher made the large-format photographs; Air Survey Corporation of Sterling, Virginia, produced the aerial photography and digital mapping from which the site-plan delineations were made.

Description:

The structure is a long, sweeping concrete arch measuring 88' long and 10' wide. The creekside abutment supporting its east end is a remnant of Lyons Mill, which once stood at this site. The masonry of the abutments is square-cut ashlar stone laid in regular courses. The concrete deck, now covered by asphalt, is flanked by plain concrete railings with some recent wood parts interspersed. Named for the former flour-mill site, the bridge cost \$2,350 to build.<sup>4</sup>

Prepared by:  
Amy Ross  
HABS/HAER Historian  
Summer 1992

Bibliography:

Bushong, William. Historic Resource Study: Rock Creek Park, District of Columbia. Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1990.

Good, Albert H. Park and Recreation Structures: Part I--Administration and Basic Service Facilities. Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1938.

Spratt, Zack. "Rock Creek's Bridges." Records of the Columbia Historical Society 53-56 (1959): 101-34.

---

<sup>4</sup> Zack Spratt, "Rock Creek's Bridges," Records of the Columbia Historical Society 53-56 (1959): 125.